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ABSTRACT

The Florida Department of Education (FDE) is developing an educational blueprint for the 1990s with a strong commitment to vocational and adult education. Commitments are being made to implement career education concepts, extend job awareness experiences to the elementary grades, counsel students to ensure early career plans, enhance vocational education successes in dropout prevention, and double efforts to reach nontraditional students. The challenge is to improve the system and send a message guaranteeing equity in training opportunities, job opportunities, and quality of life. The system must focus on providing all students with the same basic skills and reaching all groups. FDE is developing an educational blueprint that will help educators be certain that each student is successfully prepared for the career of his/her choice. Through this blueprint the educational system will emphasize career awareness experiences for elementary grades, development of students' positive self-awareness, hands-on career education in middle schools, student self-evaluation, orientation to occupations in junior high, career planning, career guidance, tracking vocational graduates, development of linkages between public and private sectors, demonstrations of the workplace to students, and women's education, especially for nontraditional occupations. (YLB)

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BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE: CAREER PREPARATION IN FLORIDA'S SCHOOLS

Betty Castor

I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THIS WORKSHOP, FOR SEVERAL REASONS. FIRST I WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THE PLANS UNDERWAY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. ONE OF MY TOP PRIORITIES THIS YEAR IS TO DEVELOP AN EDUCATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR THE 1990'S. THIS BLUEPRINT WILL NOT BE A THEORETICAL, BUREAUCRATIC CONCEPT. I'M TALKING ABOUT

* A COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENT CAREER EDUCATION CONCEPTS
* A COMMITMENT TO EXTEND JOB AWARENESS EXPERIENCES TO THE ELEMENTARY GRADES.
* A COMMITMENT TO COUNSEL EVERY STUDENT TO ENSURE AN EARLY CAREER PLAN
* A COMMITMENT TO ENHANCE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SUCCESSES IN DROP-OUT PREVENTION
* AND, FINALLY, A COMMITMENT TO DOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO REACH THOSE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS WHO SO SORELY NEED OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESOURCES.

THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME YOU WILL SEE A COMMITMENT OF THIS MAGNITUDE FOR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

A SHORT TIME AGO, I BROUGHT TOGETHER MY SENIOR MANAGEMENT STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, SCHOOL BOARDS, AND TEACHER UNIONS. WE SPENT TWO DAYS ANALYZING HOW WE WERE GOING TO ENHANCE EDUCATION'S EFFORTS TO PREPARE FLORIDA'S POPULATION FOR THE YEAR 2000. ONE OF THE ANSWERS, WE CONCLUDED, LIES IN THE FULL UTILIZATION OF OUR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FLORIDA'S INCREASINGLY CHANGING, COMPLEX, AND TECHNOLOGICAL WORKPLACE.

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I KNOW IT HAS BEEN SAID THERE IS NO DATA ON THE FUTURE. BUT, WHILE WE MAY NOT HAVE THE HARD FACTS, WE HAVE MUCH MORE THAN IDLE PREDICTIONS. WE HAVE ALREADY IDENTIFIED WHAT WE MUST DO, WHAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN. TO SUCCESSFULLY MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE.

WE MUST, FIRST OF ALL, UNDERSTAND THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF FLORIDA, AND THE CHALLENGES THEY PRESENT.

WE'RE GROWING FASTER THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER STATE: 65,000 STUDENTS THIS YEAR; 75,000 NEXT YEAR; AND WE HAVE THE HIGHEST DROP-OUT RATE IN THE NATION.

YOU ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THESE STATISTICS. THE CHALLENGE IS HOW TO IMPROVE OUR SYSTEM; EMBRACE OUR SURGING NUMBER OF STUDENTS; TARGET OUR "AT-RISK" STUDENTS; AND INCORPORATE THESE POPULATIONS INTO FLORIDA'S WORK FORCE. WE MUST SEND A MESSAGE THAT GUARANTEES EQUITY IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES. EQUITY IN OUR JOB OPPORTUNITIES. AND EQUITY IN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE THE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE ENJOYED BY MOST FLORIDIANS.

I BELIEVE THAT ALL STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL MUST MEET THE SAME BASIC SKILLS REQUIREMENTS. SOME WILL CHOOSE MORE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COURSES. SOME WILL SELECT MORE ACADEMIC COURSES. BUT ALL SHOULD GRADUATE WITH THE BASIC SKILLS NEEDED TO CONTINUE THEIR LIVES - WHETHER THAT MEANS HIGHER EDUCATION, A TECHNICAL SCHOOL, A MILITARY CAREER, OR IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT.

THE GROUPS WE ARE CONCENTRATING ON ARE NOT JUST NUMBERS. THEY ARE PEOPLE. AS EDUCATORS WE TEND TO IDENTIFY AND CLASSIFY OUR POPULATION INTO WELL-DEFINED, WELL-STUDIED GROUPS. THIS ALLOWS US TO EFFECTIVELY HANDLE THE VOLUME OF PEOPLE WE DEAL WITH IN OUR SCHOOLS.

BUT THIS MEANS OF "TRACKING" OUR STUDENTS HAS OTHER, LESS POSITIVE, IMPLICATIONS. AND THESE IMPLICATIONS MUST BE ADDRESSED AS WELL, AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION, AND BY ALL EDUCATORS WHO WANT OUR PROGRAMS TO BE SUCCESSFUL FOR MORE OF OUR CHILDREN.

FORTUNATELY FOR FLORIDA, THE KEY ELEMENTS ARE ALREADY IN PLACE.

THE THREE MAJOR COMPONENTS -- SECONDARY SCHOOLS, VOCATIONAL CENTERS, AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES -- ALL HAVE EXCELLENT PROGRAMS WITH THE POTENTIAL TO PREPARE FLORIDA'S WORKERS FOR THE YEAR 2000.

WE ALSO HAVE OTHER ELEMENTS IN PLACE. GOVERNOR MARTINEZ HAS CREATED THE WORK FORCE 2000 STUDY PANEL. THIS PANEL IS DESIGNED TO EXPLORE WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN THE SKILLS OF FLORIDA'S WORKERS AND THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE JOB MARKET OF THE YEAR 2000. I FULLY SUPPORT THE GOVERNOR IN THIS EFFORT, AND I'M ANXIOUS TO FIND PRO-ACTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR FLORIDA'S FUTURE LABOR MARKET NEEDS.

IN ADDITION TO THE GOVERNOR'S WORK FORCE 2000, WE ESTABLISHED THE SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE. MEMBERS OF THIS TASK FORCE INCLUDED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICIALS, DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES, AND OTHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY LEADERS. THE TASK FORCE HAS ALREADY SUBMITTED A LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK WHICH WILL IMPROVE CAREER PREPARATION FOR ALL OF FLORIDA'S STUDENTS.

WORKING WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, THE DEPARTMENT IS DEVELOPING OUR EDUCATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE. THIS BLUEPRINT WILL HELP US TO BE CERTAIN THAT EACH STUDENT IS SUCCESSFULLY PREPARED FOR THE CAREER OF HIS OR HER CHOICE.

THROUGH THIS BLUEPRINT, WE MUST ATTACK THE CHALLENGES OF DROP-OUT PREVENTION, CAREER ACCESS FOR MINORITIES AND WOMEN, THE NEEDS OF WORKING FAMILIES AND CHILD CARE, AND THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF ALL OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY IS DEMANDING A QUALIFIED WORKFORCE, A WORKFORCE WHICH CAN READ, WRITE, COMPUTE, COMMUNICATE AND HAVE A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD OF WORK. CORPORATE AMERICA SPENDS 200 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING ITS WORKFORCE, AND AT LEAST 35 BILLION DOLLARS ON REMEDIAL TRAINING. WE MUST ENABLE FLORIDA'S CITIZENS TO ACQUIRE SKILLS THAT WILL PREPARE THEM TO ENTER A COMPETITIVE WORLD MARKETPLACE. AND WE NEED TO START AT AN EARLY AGE.

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN AN AWARENESS OF THE WORLD OF WORK AND HIS OR HER RELATIONSHIP TO IT, EACH STUDENT SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH A SERIES OF EXPERIENCES IN THE KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADES WHICH HAVE BEEN DESIGNED FOR THIS PURPOSE. THESE EXPERIENCES SHOULD ASSIST THE STUDENT TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF WORK AS A MEANS OF BECOMING A SELF-SUFFICIENT, CONTRIBUTING MEMBER OF SOCIETY, AND OF EXPRESSING HIS TALENT AND CAPABILITIES.

WE WILL HAVE ALMOST A MILLION STUDENTS IN OUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS NEXT FALL. THAT'S MORE STUDENTS IN FLORIDA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS THAN THERE ARE CITIZENS IN MANY STATES. THESE STUDENTS SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO DIFFERENT CAREERS SO THEY CAN GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF WORK.

AS EDUCATORS, WE MUST ENABLE ALL STUDENTS TO HAVE A POSITIVE SELF-AWARENESS SO THEY CAN GRASP THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY.

WHEN A STUDENT REACHES THE SIXTH GRADE, A HANDS ON CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM SHOULD BEGIN. MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN SHOULD TAKE STEPS TOWARD FOCUSING ON THEIR CAREER GOALS. PLUS, THE STUDENTS NEED AN UNDERSTANDING OF TECHNOLOGICAL CONCEPTS TO SEE HOW TECHNOLOGY MAY IMPACT THEIR CAREER PLAN.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND INTERESTS PRIOR TO ORIENTATION AND EXPLORATION OF CAREERS. IN ORDER FOR FURTHER CAREER INFORMATION TO BE AS MEANINGFUL AS POSSIBLE, A STUDENT SHOULD BEGIN THE PROCESS OF EVALUATING CAREER INFORMATION IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS OR HER OWN PERSONAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS.

DURING THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES A BROAD ORIENTATION TO OCCUPATIONS SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO STUDENTS. AT THIS POINT THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION SHOULD ALSO BEGIN.

BY THE END OF EIGHTH GRADE, EACH STUDENT SHOULD HAVE A CAREER GOAL AND A MATCHING CURRICULUM FOR THAT GOAL. THIS FOUR YEAR PLAN SHOULD BE DEVELOPED WITH INPUT FROM THE STUDENT, PARENTS, TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS. THE PLAN SHOULD BE EVALUATED ONCE A YEAR, AND REVISED TO MATCH THE STUDENTS PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.

A CAREER PLAN IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. A CURRICULUM STUDY BY POLK COUNTY TEACHERS FOUND THAT 25% OF STUDENTS WERE PURSUING AN ACADEMIC TRACK, 25% OF STUDENTS WERE PURSUING A VOCATIONAL TRACK AND THE REST, HALF OF THE STUDENTS, WERE NOT PURSUING ANY TRACK AT ALL. THEY ARE JUST WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL WITH NO TARGET IN SIGHT.

FLORIDA MUST STRUCTURE AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT CAN PROVIDE EACH STUDENT WITH GUIDANCE AND OPPORTUNITY. WE MUST STRUCTURE A CURRICULUM THAT GIVES STUDENTS THE KNOWLEDGE AND CREDENTIALS THEY NEED TO PURSUE A POST SECONDARY EDUCATION AND, IF THEY CHOOSE, GAIN IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT. FLORIDA CAN NOT AFFORD TO LET STUDENTS COMPLETE TWELVE YEARS OF EDUCATION WITHOUT ANY EMPLOYABLE SKILLS.

ANOTHER ELEMENT IN THIS EDUCATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE IS THE CONTINUATION OF A SYSTEM TO TRACK GRADUATES FROM CURRENT VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE DEVELOPED THE OCCUPATIONAL IDENTIFIER PROJECT TO DO THIS.

THIS PROJECT DEVELOPS ACCURATE FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION ON FORMER STUDENTS AND TRACES THEIR PROGRESS IN THE JOB MARKET. FROM THIS INFORMATION, WE CAN EVALUATE HOW SUCCESSFUL OUR PROGRAMS ARE IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT. THIS PROJECT IS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE NATION AND WILL BE A CRITICAL PART OF ENSURING THAT OUR VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS ARE SUCCESSFUL.

IT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL THAT WE CONTINUE TO DEVELOP BETTER LINKAGES BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

WE MUST PLACE HEAVY EMPHASIS ON DEMONSTRATING THE WORK PLACE TO OUR STUDENTS. FOR THAT REASON I WILL RECOMMEND A PILOT PROJECT THIS YEAR TO CREATE A CAREER CREDIT WHERE ALL STUDENTS CAN BE PLACED IN A WORK ENVIRONMENT...IN GOVERNMENT...MILITARY...OR BUSINESSES WITH APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION.

EDUCATION MUST KEEP UP WITH THE CHANGING DEMANDS OF SOCIETY, AND BE ABLE TO RETRAIN WORKERS. PREPARING OUR VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION CENTERS TO RETRAIN THESE WORKERS WILL HELP INSURE AGAINST THE EMPLOYMENT CRISIS THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL STATES FACED WITH THEIR WORKERS.

ANOTHER FORM OF DISPLACEMENT OCCURS WHEN MOTHERS AND HOME MAKERS RE-ENTER THE WORK FORCE. WOMEN TODAY CAN EXPECT TO WORK FOR 35 YEARS IN SOME FORM OF PAID EMPLOYMENT. BUT OF THE 4000 JOB TITLES LISTED IN THE DICTIONARY OF OCCUPATIONAL TITLES, ONLY 20 OF THEM HAVE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF WOMEN IN THEM.

THIS MAKES IT ESSENTIAL THAT OUR VOCATIONAL CENTERS BECOME ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE TO PREPARING WOMEN FOR NON-TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS. LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE FIGHTING, AND CORRECTIONS ARE ALL EXAMPLES OF NON-TRADITIONAL JOBS FOR WHICH WOMEN COULD BE TRAINED.

UNFORTUNATELY THE MAJOR BARRIER KEEPING WOMEN FROM RE-ENTERING THE WORK FORCE, OR EVEN VOCATIONAL TRAINING, IS THE AVAILABILITY OF QUALITY CHILD CARE. FOR MANY WOMEN, ACCESS TO THE WORK FORCE IS DICTATED BY THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE, HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE.

* SPECIAL NEEDS OF MINORITIES (TALKING POINT)

* ILLITERACY (TALKING POINT)

THESE ARE THE ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED. HOW SUCCESSFUL WE ARE IN HANDLING THESE ISSUES WILL BE A MAJOR FACTOR IN HOW COMPETITIVE FLORIDA IS IN A WORLD ECONOMY.

THANK YOU.